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ABSTRACT

Keyano College (KC), in northeast Alberta, has been involved in several successful partnerships with native communities to deliver community-based programs. Strong college/community partnerships recognize the cultural identity of participants while providing them with the skills vital to personal, community, and economic development. Because the native communities within the region are each unique, with their own history, culture, and concerns, they do not identify the same felt needs, and so are rarely ready for the same programs at the same time. Credit and non-credit programs have been developed specific to each community's needs. For example, at Fort McKay, programs leading to Class II Bus Operator and Class I Truck Transport licensure have been offered, resulting in an 80% employment rate in transportation for successful students. Another effort, the Syncrude Canada/Alberta Career Development and Employment/KC partnership has provided residents of Conklin, Janvier, Anzac, and Gregoire Lake with the opportunity to combine academics and job training. Upon completing the program, participants have been placed in jobs at Syncrude. The most extensive community-based programming offered by KC has been in Fort Chipewyan, with programs including adult basic education, college preparation, and clerk-typist, waiter/waitress, and basic management courses, in addition to the Reaching Out Program (a volunteer literacy project), and a Pre-Carpentry Program initiated by the Cree Band in 1991. At Fort McMurray, the college has been involved in an on-the-job training program with Suncor and the Fort McMurray Regional Job Training Association, in which 83% of the participants have subsequently been employed by Suncor. (MAB)

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Keyano College

Effective Programming Partnerships:

Assisting Aboriginal People to Meet Employer Expectations

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For the past twenty-five years, Keyano College and its predecessor have provided the City of Fort McMurray and surrounding region of northeast Alberta with an ever widening spectrum of programs and services. The cumulative historical record is one of twenty-five years of growth and response to community, regional and provincial needs for post-secondary education, training and service.

The development of the oil sands during the early 1970's was the most significant factor in regional economic growth. This growth also had a major impact on the College. The rapid increase in population during that time and the regional industrial growth required Keyano College to expand programs and services. Increased employment opportunities were available in Fort McMurray while the potential for increased employment elsewhere in the region did not exist. The regional assumption, during this period of growth and expansion, was that everyone in Northeast Alberta would aspire to leave home and work in Fort McMurray.

The available employment during this period of growth required additional education and training. Keyano College recognized the need to develop programs to provide the necessary upgrading to make residents employable in the oil sands industry. To facilitate the transition from the home community to Fort McMurray, Keyano College built excellent family and single student accommodation units. However, the residents of the region did not relocate to Fort McMurray as anticipated. At first, many did move to the city but the difficulties encountered resulted in many returning home with a resolve to not leave again. The College began to recognize the need for community based native programming as well as on-campus programming.

Native students from Fort McMurray and the region continue to attend Keyano College. Native student credit enrollment at Fort McMurray Campuses for 1989-90 school year was 382. The native student credit enrollment at the Fort McMurray campuses represented 15.3% of the total credit enrollment during 1990-91. The credit enrollment for native students during the period September 1, 1991 to March 31, 1992 represents approximately 16 percent of the total credit enrollment. Employment aspirations, political concerns, environmental issues and community development are some of the current issues that are resulting in native people entering University Transfer, Computer Business Systems, Trades and Business Administration Programs as well as Academic Upgrading and Equipment Operator Programs.

Keyano College has offered credit and non-credit programs throughout the region on an ad hoc basis. Programs offered frequently include Basic Job Readiness Training and Academic Upgrading. These programs have been offered in Fort Chipewyan, Gregoire Lake, Janvier and Fort McKay.

Specific programs have been offered as requested by each community. The Community of Fort McKay has a Development Corporation which has transportation contracts with Syncrude Canada and other developers within the region. The need for residents to achieve the license for Class II Bus Operator and Class I Truck Transport was identified. An appropriate program for each was designed and offered locally. Eighty percent of the successful participants are employed in transportation.

The Syncrude Canada Ltd/Alberta Career Development and Employment/Keyano College Program is designed to provide residents of Conklin, Janvier, Anzac and Gregoire Lake with the opportunity to combine academics and job placement. The selected participants attend an on-site work placement one week and academic enhancement classes during the alternate week in the home community. At the completion of the six month program, participants who have demonstrated academic advancement as well as meeting the employer's expectation are offered employment with Syncrude.

The most extensive community based programming offered by the College has been in Fort Chipewyan. Keyano College began offering Basic Job Readiness Training in Fort Chipewyan in 1976. Programs to date have included Adult Basic Education, College Preparation, Clerk-typist, Waiter/Waitress, Basic Management and Personal Management. Non-Credit general interest programs are offered as identified by the community. The College has a small library that is used for program resources and is also open to the community. In addition, the Reaching Out Program, a volunteer tutor/student literacy project, has operated in Fort Chipewyan since 1983. Client specific programs have been offered as well. Keyano College was a partner in an innovative Pre-Carpentry Program initiated by the Cree Band in 1991.

In Fort McMurray, Keyano College has supported training of Native peoples by the establishing of two positions, that of Native Counsellor and that of Native & International Education Co-ordinator. The Native Counsellor position has been instrumental in facilitating the process for students from the communities who are preparing to enter Keyano College. The position also provided support to students during their program.

The Coordinator of Native and International Education is Program development on campus as well as in the communities.

Partnerships are as necessary in Fort McMurray for successful learning opportunities as they are in the communities. Programs which have been offered in Fort McMurray include: Process Operator, Syncrude Heavy Equipment, Suncor General Worker, Stand Tending, Bank Customer Service, Employment Skills for Today's Workplace and Aboriginal Women in the Workplace.

Partnerships That Worked

The Syncrude Canada/Alberta Career Development and Employment/Keyano College Program has been successful. The community was involved in the initial discussions to decide the logistics and selection process. Industry involved the on-line supervisors in the participant selection. Attendance was equally important for academic enhancement and work placement. The participants became models within their communities. the program required the on-going attention of all the partners. The participants who were successful were offered employment.

The Cree Indian Band in Fort Chipewyan recognized that each year contractors were hired for renovation and construction of homes. The Band invited Keyano College, the Chipewyan Band, Metis Local 124, Alberta Career Development and Employment and Canada Employment to partner with them to indenture local residents as apprentices. The program meant labourers ranging in education level (0-12) would be released from the workplace for 199 hours of academic enrichment, 128 of trades related theory and 45 hours of employment orientation skills. At the end of eight months, five participants had completed year I of the apprenticeship program (theory and practical).

Suncor was interested in developing a strategy for employing native peoples. It was believed the line supervisors must be involved. Ownership for the project by Suncor employees would be necessary for success. Suncor/Fort McMurray Regional Job Training Association/Keyano College worked with the local Native Employment and Training agencies to develop a potential participant list. The potential participants were interviewed by the line Supervisor as well as the usual participants. Participants entered a 24 week program with the last 16 weeks being on-the-job training. The first eight weeks included academic enhancement, employment orientation skills, and general worker training. The program has been offered twice and 83% of the participants are employed with Suncor.

Stumbling Blocks

In providing programs we believe failure only occurs if you repeat the same action in the same manner or if you do not share and this leads to someone else repeating the same action. However, there have been and there continues to be stumbling blocks and learning opportunities for each of us. I will share one or two with you.

A Guide Training Program was developed in consultation with Community leaders and potential funders. The idea was energizing for everyone so much so that we forgot to talk to the potential participants. The program needed to be cancelled, there were no participants.

Some stumbling blocks you can not overcome but you can prepare the participants for coping with them. By the completion of a program the industry has had a hiring freeze and cannot hire as agreed at the beginning.

The Future

Some programs for the future include: (A) Native Addiction Worker Certificate Program. This will be a partnership between Keyano College and Nechi Institute. (B) Partnering with the community of Fort Chipewyan to develop and offer an Extended Care Worker Program. This is part of the community"s plan to have their elders remain at home. (C) Partnering with the Cree Band to provide security training to native people for employment on the security contract the Cree Band has with Syncrude Canada.

Another type of partnership is working with the Community of Conklin to develop an Adult Learning Centre. This project is community initiated and is progressing as the community identifies the steps. It is anticipated the facility will be completed and the first program offered this fall.

Keyano College recognizes the native communities within the region are each unique with their own history, culture and concerns. The philosophy of "what is good for one is good for all" will generally prove ineffective in the context of community individuality. Communities are rarely ready for the same program at the same time and will not identify all of the same felt needs.

Programming priorities need to focus on the developmental process and on relationship building rather than focusing on numbers of programs or courses offered. Programs offered in the context of educational quality and community need have greater potential for lasting, positive impact on community life. The amount of available financial resources will always be a crucial variable in programming decisions as well.

Programs developed within strong college/community partnerships can form a foundation for community development. The programs developed in such partnerships recognize the cultural identity of the participants as well as providing the participants with the skills for personal, community and economic development. ACCC (1989) in a brief to the Honourable Barbara MacDougall states:

> Particular attention must be given to respecting the diversity/complexity of the native communities as well as the desire within many of the communities to provide leadership in both the identification of needs and in the designing of responses to those needs.

Education and training are vital to the development of humanistic and physical infrastructures within the native communities. Utilizing both community resources and college resources, the partnerships must identify priorities in relation to long term goals and then cooperatively work towards achieving such goals. For Keyano College this is reflected in our mission statement:

> ... promotes individual and community development that will improve the quality of life in our region and throughout Alberta.